

The High Desert Observer

The Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces

February 2011

President's Message - February 2011



The SEA Share Fair is now behind us and it was a great event. Chuck and Rich were outside looking at the Moon and Jupiter with their 'scopes, while inside Tracy, Jerry (both of them!!!), Trish, Ann, Dave, Nils and yours truly were entertaining the public with displays of telescopes, astronomical images and information. We should gain a few new members for our efforts. Thanks to all who assisted!

At the January meeting we discussed many different ideas for 2011, including several possible new committees: Membership, Publicity, Junior ASLC and others. A new dues schedule was also presented. With it, Members are expected to remit their dues at the beginning of the year. Dues for new members will be prorated based on what month they join the ASLC.

Ann McPhee has agreed to chair the Apparel Committee and is already thinking about some new items for our members. John McCullough will chair the new Membership Committee and will let us know at the February 25th meeting what he's working on. We are still looking for people to chair the Publicity Committee, Fundraising Committee and committees for other projects which will be discussed at upcoming meetings.

We got so involved at the January 28th meeting that there was no time for Fred Pilcher's presentation, so Fred will present it in February. Thanks, Fred, for giving us the time to discuss the new ideas for 2011.

Our Treasurer, Janet, is recovering from her recent surgery and I am certain we all hope she is able to rejoin us in the very near future. Her dedicated husband (and former President), Bert, is temporarily handling the treasury duties.

Planning for the upcoming A.L.P.O. Conference is underway and Bert will give us an update in February. In addition a new colorful Society brochure has been designed and will be presented at the next meeting.

That very nasty freezing weather seems to be behind us and hopefully we will have clear skies in the weeks and months ahead. Great for observing and star parties.

Finally, as usual we are requesting donations of excess eyepieces you might have no further need for. These will be used for our Loaner Telescope program. If you have any, please bring to the February meeting.

Hope to see you all there.

Your President,
Ron J. Kramer

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The Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC) is dedicated to expanding public awareness and understanding of the wonders of the universe. ASLC holds frequent observing sessions and star parties and provides opportunities to work on club and public educational projects. Members receive the High Desert Observer, our monthly newsletter, membership in the Astronomical League, including AL's quarterly A.L. Reflector. Club dues are \$30.00 per year, including electronic delivery. Send dues payable to ASLC with an application form or note to: Treasurer ASLC, PO Box 921, Las Cruces, NM 88004

ASLC members are entitled to a \$10.00 discount to Sky and Telescope magazine.

ASLC OFFICERS, 2011

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Next Meeting

Fred Pilcher will give us "Some Highlights from the October, 2010, Convention of the Division of Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Association Meeting."

Of the hundreds of oral and poster presentations he will describe only five, but invite questions from the audience on other topics which may have been covered. The audience will be presumed to have only a very elementary background in planetary science. For each topic, he will start with these basic principles and build up slowly and carefully with the new finding as a climactic ending. Get the latest on the planets at this month's meeting.

Articles Needed

The High Desert Observer is **your** astronomical society newsletter. The quality of the newsletter can only be obtained if we get high quality articles from people like **you**. Please take some time and write an article on what you are doing in astronomy that you would like to share with your fellow amateur astronomers. Thanks in advance for your efforts!.

Events

ASLC hosts both a deep sky viewing and imaging at our dark sky location in Upham and a public in-town observing session for the public at the International Delights Cafe. Both sessions begin at dusk. For information on these and other events, please see the ASLC website at <http://www.aslc-nm.org>.

Science Education Alliance Share Fair.



The Twelfth Annual Science Education Alliance (SEA) Share Fair was held on Saturday, February 12, in front of the Las Cruces Museum of Natural History (LCMNH) at the Mesilla Valley Mall. The Share Fair is a science and mathematics fair full of activities and demonstrations.

Scientists and mathematicians from organizations around the community conducted hands-on science activities appropriate for elementary- and middle school- aged children.

The Share Fair provided enrichment activities in science and math education to excite children about these subjects. The event shared education and career experience from these fields. Participating organizations raised

awareness of resources available to teachers, students and their guardians that could enrich the education experience.

There were dozens of exhibitors from the area with activities set up on tables where kids could have fun and learn. Presenters in the past have come from NASA-White Sands Test Facility, NMSU, Asombro Institute and local clubs such as the Las Cruces Astronomical Society, 4-H, New Mexico MESA, NASA's Science, Engineering, Mathematics and Aerospace.

The share fair is sponsored by the Science Education Alliance (SEA), a non-profit educational organization which administers Science Advisors (SCIAD), in partnership with LCMNH.

The ASLC was represented by Chuck Sterling and Rich Richins were outside looking at the Moon and Jupiter with their 'scopes. Inside, Tracy Stuart, Jerry Gaber, Jerry McMahan, Trish Conley, Ann McPhee, Dave Dockery, Nils Allan and Ron Kramer were entertaining the public with displays of telescopes, astronomical images and information.



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The 2011 A. L. P. O. Convention in Las Cruces, NM

By Berton Stevens

The ASLC is hosting the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observer's 2011 Convention on July 21-23 at the NMSU Astronomy Department. We are expecting forty to fifty attendees for the convention. We are also thinking that there might be a few bus trips the day(s) before the convention. ALPO usually does not have a vendor room or door prizes. The most important thing we do need to do is get the committee in place. Here are the committee positions and those that are filled:

Convention Chair: Berton Stevens

Preregistration Chair:

Registration Chair:

Papers Session Chair: Richard Schmude

Venue Liaison Chair: Vincent Dovydaitis

On-Campus Housing Chair: Fred Pilcher

Off-Campus Housing Chair: Fred Pilcher

Banquet Chair: Ron Kramer

Technical Support Chair: Ron Kramer

Publicity Chair: ???

Excursion Chair: ???

Swap Table Chair: ???

Please volunteer for one of these positions. We will also need volunteers to fill in each subcommittee. There is plenty of work and we will need everyone to make this a great convention for the A.L.P.O.

Here is a tentative schedule:

Tuesday, July 19

Evening - Housing check-in for early arrivals

Wednesday, July 20

Registration at housing

Bus trip - VLA

Thursday, July 21

Registration at housing

Bus trip - Sunspot, Apache Point, Space

Museum, White Sands Missile Range Museum

A.L.P.O. Board Meeting

Friday, July 22

Registration at NMSU Astronomy Department

Papers Sessions Day 1 at NMSU Astronomy

Saturday, July 23

Registration at NMSU Astronomy Department

Papers Sessions Day 2 at NMSU Astronomy

Evening - Banquet

Observing Open Clusters 2010

By John Kutney

Introduction

One of the most familiar open clusters is the Pleiades, visible to the unaided eye. The Pleiades can be seen from both hemispheres and has a long history in both astronomy and the arts. There are many more open clusters than can be envisioned that are catalogued with less popular or even obscure names. The observation of open clusters goes beyond the accustomed catalogues or lists such as Messier, Caldwell, IC, and NGC. Observing open clusters has provided new classification determinants and extends the knowledge of this significant part of our galaxy. It enables one to appreciate the importance and ubiquitous nature of these objects and allows one to find detail in open clusters that is normally overlooked.

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This turned out to be a tremendous “local skies” project since the nature of open clusters allows one to observe in light polluted areas such as Las Cruces as long as there is good transparency. I was able to observe all the open clusters on the Astronomical League list from my backyard, though some were quite difficult due to size and magnitude. In fact, I purposely did not select any objects from this list when observing from our various dark sites.

Astronomical League Open Cluster Observing Program

Late this fall I was awarded a Certificate and Pin for completing the requirements for the Open Cluster Observing Club. I only considered the size, clarity, and asterisms encapsulated in the star formation when I observed an open cluster prior to this program. The Astronomical League program introduced me to a discipline of classification and to a large selection of new objects often bypassed by the visual observer. The advanced program from the AL requires 125 open clusters of multiple varieties and catalogues. One must observe and classify each cluster and sketch at least 50 of them to receive the award and certificate. This program will enhance your appreciation for open clusters with the hidden beauty and details that they provide.

There are nine open clusters from Messier’s List of 110 objects. These can be used as base points for observing and designating the Trumpler Classifications required by the AL. Most of the objects on the list are from obscure or not well-known catalogues such as the following:

Table 1: Catalogue Names on the AL List of 125 Open Clusters

Messier(9)	NGC (46)
IC (7)	King (11)
Dolidze (2)	Stock (2)
Biurakan (2)	Harvard (1)
French (1)	Tombaugh (1)
Berkeley (13)	Trumpler (12)
Collinder (8)	Ruprecht (4)
Melotte (1)	Stephenson (1)
Dolidze Dzimselejsvili (4)	

Open Clusters

There are over forty thousand open clusters in the Milky Way galaxy with most along the galactic plane. They come in all sizes and shapes and are a base camp for the scientific study of the evolution of the stars. Clusters can range from thousands of stars (NGC 6819 in Cygnus) to as small as 6 stars (Dolidze-Dzimselysvili 6 in Hercules). The book *Star Clusters*¹ contains an extensive catalog of clusters along with data on the history and the field of study. The most complete catalogue of Open Clusters may be located online at the Goddard Space Flight Center databases which are based on the Lund Catalogue of Open Cluster Data. There are near 50 data points as well as astrophotographs for each of the open clusters contained in the database².

Classification

There have been many attempts to classify open clusters. The main issue was the comparison of an open cluster independent of its distance. Distance estimates in the past led to misclassification in size and number of stars. Even the small sampling of open clusters for the AL List can reveal this issue in estimation of the number of

¹ Hynes, S. and Archival, B., **Star Clusters**, Wellmann-Bell, Inc. Richmond ,Va.

² <http://heararc.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

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stars. Robert J. Trumpler published his classic paper on the open cluster system of the galaxy in 1930. His classification has stood the test of time.

Trumpler Classification

Clusters were placed into 36 categories according to the degree of concentration, brightness, and the number of stars in the open cluster:

Four Groups(I, II, III, IV) for concentration and detachment from star fields:

- I. Cluster is strongly detached from the stellar background with a strong core star density.
- II. Cluster is detached from the stellar background with a weak core density.
- III. Cluster is detached from the stellar background with no core concentration.
- IV. Cluster is slightly detached from the stellar background with higher density than the background with no visible core.

Three Groups (1, 2, 3) for brightness:

1. All stars have about the same level of brightness.
2. Stars have a regular range of brightness³.
3. Bright stars mixed with many weaker stars with a wide range of magnitudes.

Three (3) Groups (P, M, R) for the number of stars:

- P. Cluster is poor in stars (less than 50).
- M. Cluster has a medium number of stars (50 to 100).
- R. Cluster is rich in stars (greater than 100).

Example Target Classifications

Therefore, there are 4 x 3 x 3=36 possible categories. “Touring the Trumpler Classes” by Richard Harshaw⁴ provides a sampling of all 36 Trumpler Classification categories. The paper also provides a nice table separated into a tour of summer skies and winter skies. He states that he tried to use clusters that are “easy to identify and stunning to look at”.

The following provides some examples of selected items from the AL list that I have observed.

Class	My Log Description	Name	Con	Size	Mag
I 1 R	Wedge shaped, the cluster is detached from the stellar background. Stars are all about the same brightness, there is a strong core density with a large amount of stars.	NGC 6819	Cyg	5'	7.3
II 2 M	Small core that has a boxy shape, not very dense in the core, field is detached from the stellar background, city lights helps in this sky area to block higher magnitude stars.	NGC 6475 M7	Sco	75'	3.3

³ Regular implies a normal type of distribution but leaves this open to interpretation. After observing multiple clusters this becomes more obvious.

⁴ www.saguaroastro.org

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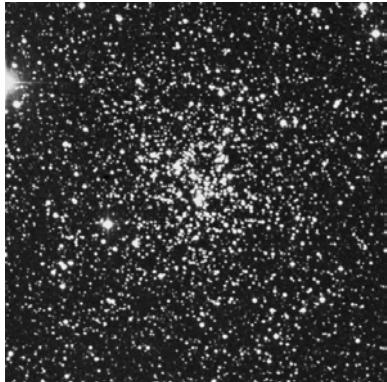
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	Good range of brightness in the stars; large cluster with many stars, used 32mm for wider field of view. Several arcs visible with rectangular/oval shape in center				
II 1 P	Cluster is detached from the stellar background with a light core density, all the stars are the same level of brightness and there are a small number of stars. Slightly elongated E-W.	Ruprecht 3	CMa	3'	?
II 2 P	Detached from the stellar background with a slight core density. There is a regular range of brightness across stars. There is a small number of stars. Somewhat of a "v" shape.	Trumpler 9	PuP	6'	8.7
IV 3 P	Weakly detached stars, no real core, several bright stars, distributed randomly. One brighter star in center; not many stars in the cluster.	NGC 6383	Sco	20'	5.5
III 2 M	Bright, large with a medium number of stars. Detached from the stellar background without a dense core. There is a regular range of brightness across the stars. Cross-like asterism at the center.	NGC 1912 M38	Aur	15'	6.4
II 2 M n	Slight, dense core, detached from the stellar background, nebulosity in the area, Lagoon Nebula (M8) is west of N6530. Regular range of brightness in the stars; medium number of stars in the cluster, about uniform in brightness.	NGC 6530	Sgr	15'	4.6

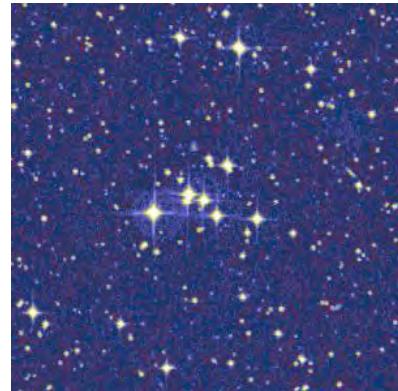
Digital Sky Survey Samples



NGC 6819 I 1 R



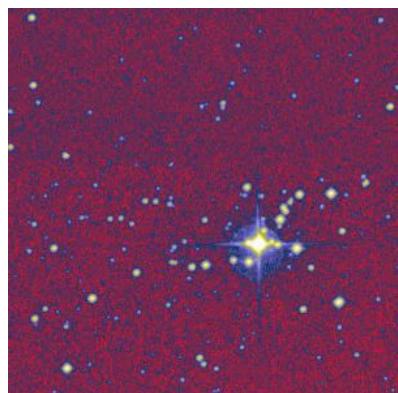
NGC 6475-M7 II 2 M



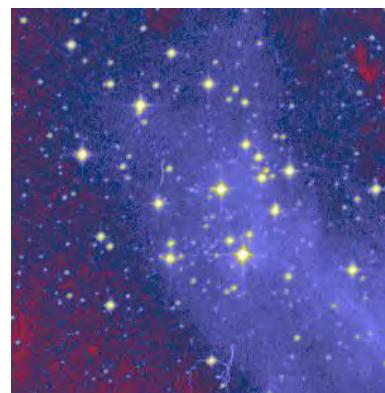
Ruprecht 3 II 1 P



Trumpler 9 II 2 P



NGC 6383 IV 3 P



NGC 6530 II 2 M n

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Observing the Clusters

I have observed several open clusters on the list from the Messier and Caldwell Objects but it was necessary to revisit the objects because of the requirements of the Trumpler Classifications and the new enlightenment of the special characteristics of open clusters.

There are nine Messier Objects on the list that could be used as anchors or starting points for observing and basing the classifications. Most of the objects are from obscure or not well known catalogues, such as those mentioned in Table 1. There were 36 open clusters that were less than 5 minutes of arc in size. The open clusters in the King and Berkeley Catalogues have the majority of the smaller objects, with 9 and 8 objects respectively, less than or equal to 5 minutes of arc. Collinder 401 in Aquila was the smallest in size at 1 minute of arc with a classification of IV 2 P which made it very difficult to observe in a dense field of stars. It is a bright star (magnitude 7) surrounded by seven other stars of weaker magnitude. The Sloan Digital Sky Survey came to the rescue. It became imperative to get an idea of what an open cluster looked like prior to trying to locate it and classify it. In addition, knowing the field of view of your telescope and eyepiece is very essential for the identification and classification of the open clusters. This may be used to eliminate many false groups of stars in the target areas.

Ruprecht 146 in Sagittarius was the first real challenge when starting this project. It was small (4 minutes of arc) with no bright stars in a dense field of stars. There were several objects in this area that could be Ru 146 which compounded the task. High magnification, a large aperture and an image of the object was necessary to clearly identify it. The same issue is evident for NGC 1027 with four possible targets within a field of view of 47 minutes of arc. Sorting them out requires perfect instrumentation or an idea of the structure of the cluster. This provided the groundwork for the added technique that proved very successful in locating and classifying the targets. Besides the usual methodology outlined in "Observing the Caldwell Objects" in the January 2011 HDO it was necessary to have an astrophotograph or facsimile for each object prior to viewing so the object could be identified. The Digital Sky Survey (DSS) was reliable for more common open clusters. Other objects from obscure catalogues required additional research to obtain a usable photo or picture. With this solid technique in place I was able to complete the 125 objects on the AL list in a short period of time. I was also able to sketch my view of all the objects for future reference.

Special Open Clusters

These are some of the open clusters that I found unusual or unique:

- Ruprecht 3 in Canis Major was interesting in that with a relatively small field of view of 24 minutes of arc, another cluster, Ruprecht 2, was just about 8' to the south.
- NGC 6530 in Sagittarius is the close neighbor of the Lagoon Nebula and both can be observed together.
- Collinder 401 in Aquila, which is one of the smallest of the open clusters, is a real challenge to locate and observe.
- Harvard 20 in Sagitta that has M71 just east of the object.
- NGC 2818, an open cluster in Pyxis, has an embedded planetary nebula. One of the few known open clusters that includes a planetary nebula. This one is not on the AL List.

Index of Open Clusters

As a result of observing and researching the open clusters on the AL list, an index of open cluster photos or sketches was assembled and created. The index can be sorted alphabetically, numerically, and by AL List. This "notebook" index of open cluster astrophotos will be an excellent field reference when hunting down the clusters that require a view of their structural makeup. An electronic list is possible but does not have the flexibility of a

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notebook that is ready for field usage. This index of open clusters will be expanded as additional open clusters are observed and catalogued. Photos or sketches are located at the designated page(s). Below is a sample of the alphabetical index:

Index of Open Clusters

Catalogue Name	Other Name	Page #	Page #	Con	V-mag	Size(')	Est #	Trumpler
Berk 2		35	99	Cas	?	2	100	I 3 M
Berk 58		14	24	Cas	9.7	5	40	III 2 P
.....
Biurakan 9	Berk 30	108		Mon	?	3	30	II 1 P
Cr 26	IC 1805	18		Cas	6.5	20	40	III 3 P n

Dolidze-Dzimselejsvili (DoDz) Open Clusters

This unusual duo of astronomers who located a set of eleven open clusters is somewhat of a mystery. This catalogue is not well known and information about the objects is quite scarce. There is also very little about the astronomer themselves. I became interested in the DoDz Catalogue after observing those contained on the AL List and reading an article by Paul Markov who provides some details about the clusters. Four of the objects are on the AL List but the entire catalog can be completed in a short period of time with only eleven candidates. The open clusters are easy to locate and observe. This list can be completed from your backyard in light polluted areas. The following table provides some specifications and the Trumpler Classifications. I have also included all my sketches of the DoDz open clusters.

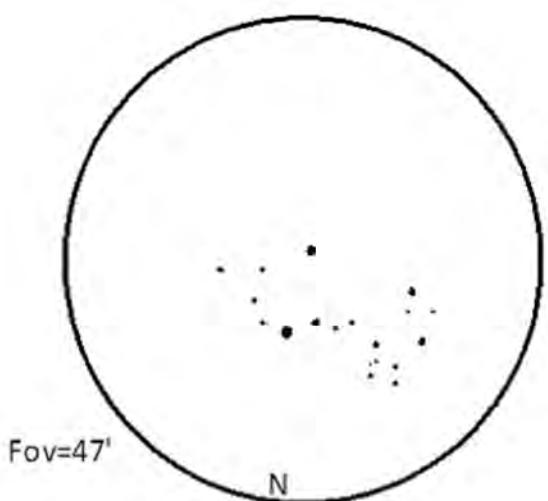
Cluster	R.A.	Dec.	Co	Size(')	# Stars	Trumpler	Notes
DoDz 1	02 47.4	+17 12	Ari	10	15	III 2 P	Detached from background , no dense core, regular range of brightness, elongated E-W
DoDz 2	05 23.9	+11 28	Ori	12	12-20	III 2 P	Detached from background, no dense core, scattered, regular range of brightness, rectangular shape
DoDz 3	05 33.7	+26 29	Tau	12	15-20	IV 2 P	Not detached from background, regular range of brightness, slightly elongated SE-NW
DoDz 4	5 36.0	+25 57	Tau	28	15-20	IV 2 P	Not detached from background, regular range of brightness, slightly elongated E-W
DoDz 5	16 27.4	+38 04	Her	27	7-10	III 1 P	Detached without dense core, same level of brightness, parallelogram shape, open in middle
DoDz 6	16 45.3	+38 17	Her	6	6	IV 2 P	Not detached from background, regular range of brightness, no visible core
DoDz 7	17 10.6	+15 32	Her	20	6	III 1 P	Detached from background, same level of brightness, spread out
DoDz 8	17 26.2	+24 11	Her	14	6	IV 2 P	Not detached from background, regular range of brightness, open in middle
DoDz 9	18 08.8	+31 32	Her	34'	25-50	III 2 P	Detached from background, regular range of brightness, circular shape , empty in the middle
DoDz 10	20 05.7	+40 32	Cyg	20	10-20	IV 1 P n	Not detached from background, no visible core, elongated N-S, nebulosity
DoDz 11	20 51.0	+35 57	Cyg	12	15-40	IV 2 P	Not detached from the background, regular range of brightness, "X" or "Y" pattern

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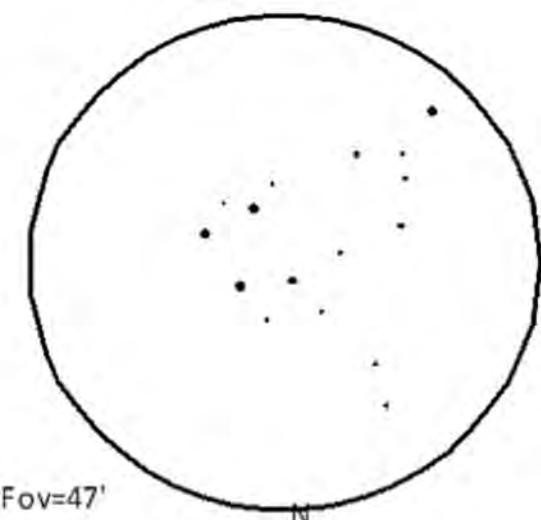
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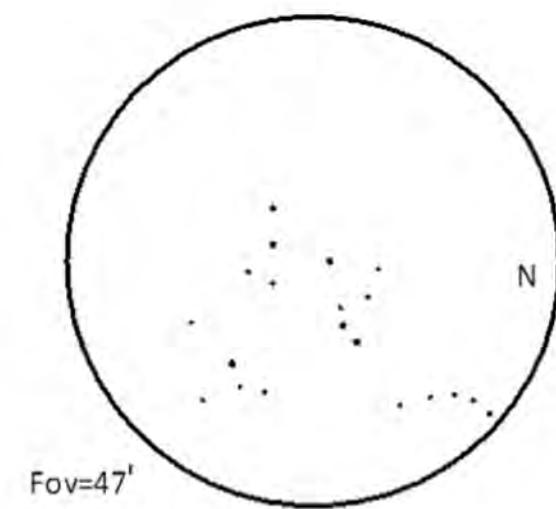
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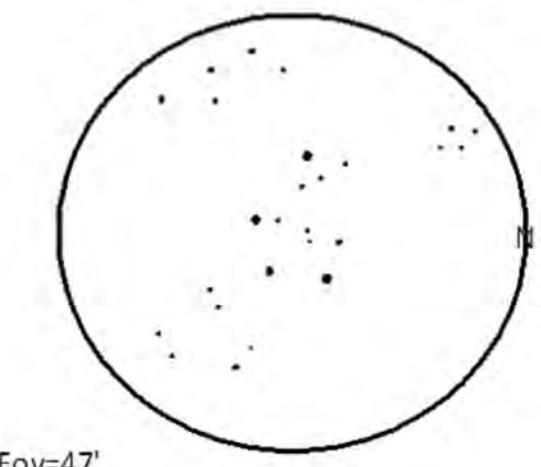
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DoDz 1



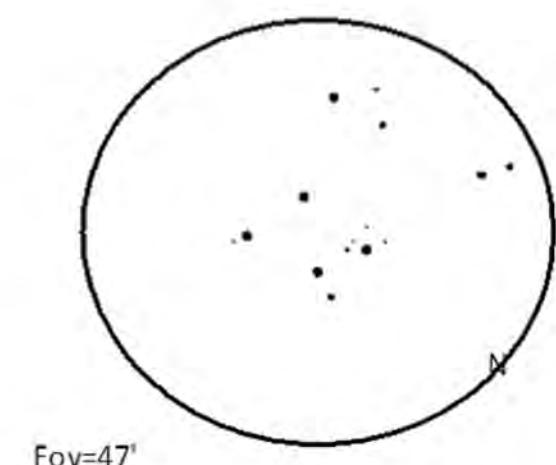
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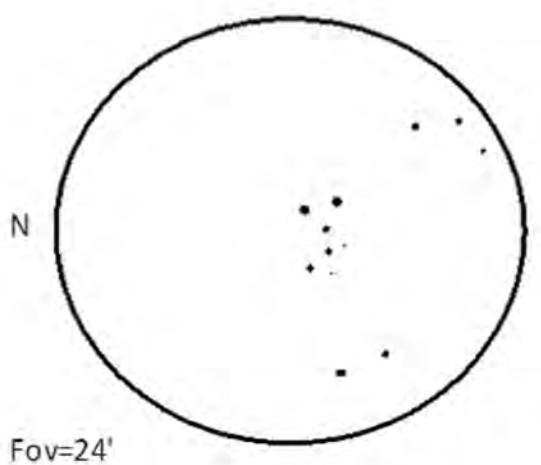
Fov=47'
DoDz 3



Fov=47'
DoDz 4



Fov=47'
DoDz 5



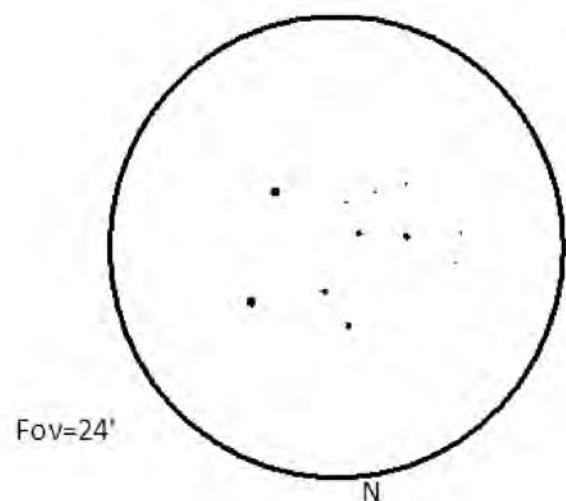
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DoDz 6

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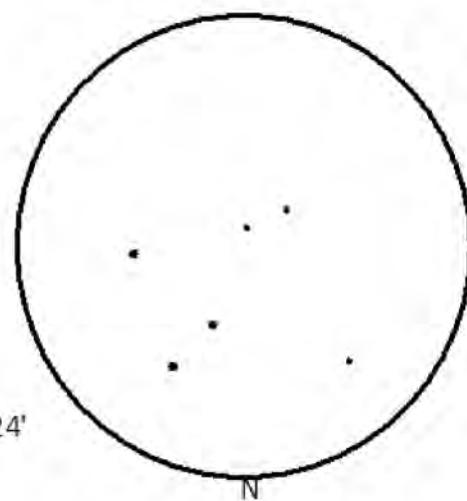
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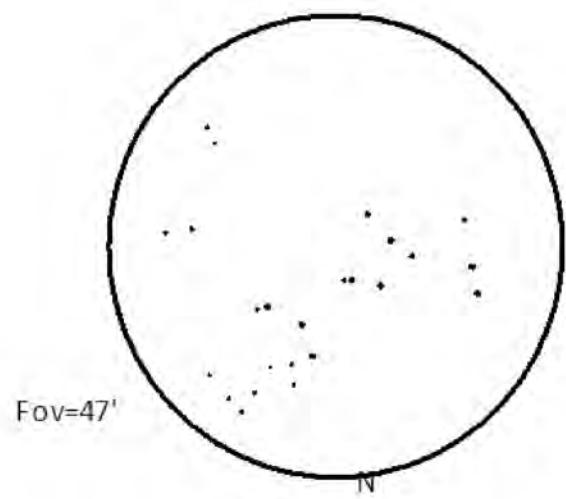
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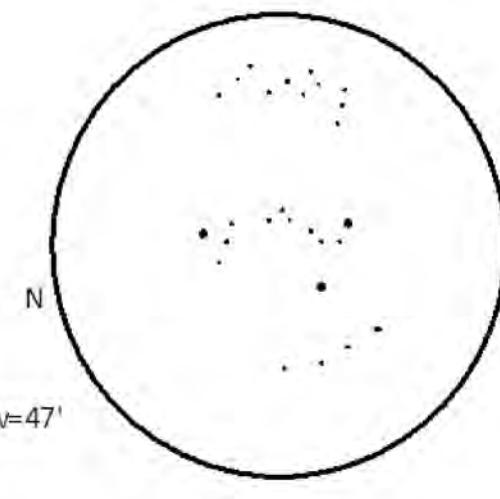
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DoDz 7



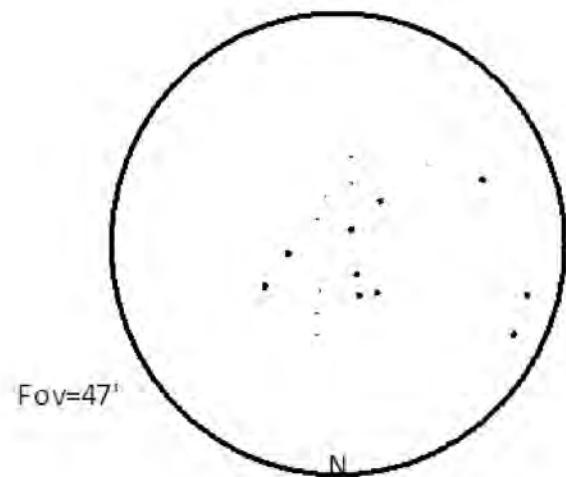
Fov=24'
DoDz 8



Fov=47'
DoDz 9



Fov=47'
DoDz 10



Fov=47'
DoDz 11

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Summary

There is a significant amount of beauty and discovery in Trumpler Classification of open clusters. All 125 objects plus the additional DoDz clusters were observed from my backyard in Las Cruces to determine if this list was feasible in a light polluted area. This program is a natural for a late spring to summer-centric project for visual observers when the skies are temperamental and one can easily setup and take down to catch those evenings when the skies are clear. Some of the more difficult and obscure open clusters require larger aperture and dark skies to collect details of these objects. The program is challenging, but well designed to satisfy those interested in expanding their knowledge of open clusters.

A Busy Outreach Week

By Jerry McMahan

Zia Middle School - February 10, 2011

Zia Middle School has the darkest sky of any school that we have attended. Chuck Sterling brought two telescopes, his 10-inch Meade and 100-mm Orion refractor. Dave Dockery had his 120-mm Orion refractor on a Meade LXD -75 mount. Steve Shaffer brought the 8-inch Dobsonian. Jerry McMahan brought the 5-inch Meade ETX-125 in its first use since coming back from the Meade repair shop. Ron Kramer and Trish Conley were at the 5-inch Meade refractor and 100-mm binoculars.

The Moon, Jupiter, the Orion Nebula and the Pleiades were among the objects viewed. We had a large group of spectators despite a basketball game being played that night. Steve wanted me to point out that it was 35 degrees Fahrenheit when we were finished. Up to that point it had not seemed to be a cold night.

Saturday, February 12, A Busy Day with Two Events.

SEA Share Fair at the Mesilla Valley Mall.

This was probably the most extensive set up that we have had at the Mall. Rich Richens had his 11-inch Celestron on Jupiter for a daytime view of the planet. I thought that was a pretty impressive trick. Chuck Sterling was also outside, with his 100-mm refractor on the Moon.

Ron Kramer and Trish Conley were at the 5-inch Meade refractor and the 100-mm binoculars inside as did Niles with a 4.5-inch Dobsonian. Each were pointed at a picture of Saturn hung on the wall. Jerry Gabers was at the table with many of the images he has taken from his backyard. They drew a lot of attention from the people that stopped by to look. Most were surprised that the pictures were taken from a backyard and not one of the Keck Telescopes. Well, they are pretty good. Jerry McMahan (me) sat at the table and answered a few questions. One of my former math students, from Canutillo High School, recognized me and did not throw rocks. Dave Dockery also stopped by for a few minutes.

I understand that the NMSU Astronomy Department were going to set up solar telescopes on the West side of the building. Some one said they did not think that NMSU came, so I do not know if they were there or not.

Moongaze

I went directly from the mall to the International Delights and set up the 5-inch at about 5:00 P.M. Later, Chuck Sterling brought both the 10-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain and the 100-mm refractor. Steve Schaffer brought the 8-inch Dobsonian and Ann McPhee brought her 10-inch Orion Dobsonian. Chuck helped her collimate her new telescope, and its addition made the most telescopes that we have had, at a Moongaze in a while. My former student brought her kids to look through the telescopes (still no rocks).

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The targets included the Moon, Jupiter, Uranus, the Pleiades, and the Orion Nebula. The crowd was one of the smaller groups that we have had for a while, but the weather was good, and we were finished by 10:00 PM since the Cafe is still closing early.

Minutes, January 2011 ASLC General Meeting

By John McCullough, Secretary, ASLC

Call to Order:

Ron Kramer, President, Astronomical Society of Las Cruces (ASLC), called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm., 28 January 2011, Room 77, Doña Ana Community College (DACC), Las Cruces, New Mexico.

President's Comments:

Ron Kramer welcomed the group and recognized new members and/or visitors present. Patricia Conley, Phil Simpson, and Robert Land were all present as new members of the Society; Mike Edwards was present as a guest. Ron thanked the 2010 officers for their efforts and hard work last year. He then introduced the 2011 officers there were present.

Secretary's Report:

There were no minutes recorded for the December 2010 meeting. Bert Stevens moved that reading of the minutes from the last general meeting (November 2010) be dispensed with; Jerry Gaber seconded. The motion passed by acclamation. There was not an additional Secretary's report.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer, Janet Stevens, has had triple bypass heart surgery performed. She is recovering in Room 413, Memorial Medical Center, through the weekend and then will be in a rehab facility. Bert Stevens, past president, reports she is ready for visitors and that he will be filling in for Janet during her recuperation. The Society wishes Janet a speedy and complete recovery. A donation has been made to the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) for the use of their hangar for the December meeting. There was not an additional Treasurer's report.

Committee Reports:

Ron Kramer advised the membership that he will expect monthly reports from the chairpersons of the various committees in addition to monthly officer reports. If an officer or committee chairman cannot be present at a scheduled monthly meeting, a brief report can be submitted to him and the secretary for presentation in the regular business portion of the monthly meeting

Vice-President:

Tracy Stuart will be responsible for scheduling presentations for the monthly meetings. His tentative presenter schedule for 2011:

Jan	Fred Pilcher
Feb	Ron Kramer
Mar	Open
Apr	Open
May	Open
Jun	TX Star Party
Jul	Open (closeout ALPO Convention business?)

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Aug	Mike Sherrick (tentative)
Sep	Open
Oct	Bert Stevens
Nov	Open
Dec	Holiday party

Tracy noted that presenters are always welcome and needed. He is working with NMSU Astronomy Department faculty and students to find presentations. Contact him if you would like to make a presentation you think will be of interest to the membership.

Secretary:

John McCullough had no additional report.

Treasurer:

Bert Stevens, acting Treasurer, had no additional report.

ALPO Convention Committee:

Bert Stevens, Committee Chairman, noted a desperate need for volunteers to work on committees and sub-committees for this summer's convention. Fred Pilcher has volunteered to handle housing for the convention. An NMSU liaison is desperately needed to arrange venues and dates for presentations. Vince Dovydaitis volunteered to handle this. A list of positions that need to be filled is in the current issue of the *High Desert Observer (HDO)*.

Leasburg Observatory Committee:

Rich Richins, Committee Chairman, was not present to provide a status update.

Apparel Committee:

Ron Kramer, Committee Chairman, still has items available for purchase following tonight's meeting. This is a fund raising effort for the Society. Ron would like to step away from the responsibilities of this effort for the time being. Ann McPhee volunteered to take over for Ron.

Education Committee:

Rich Richins, Committee Chairman, was not present to provide a status update.

Historian:

Joseph Mancilla, Society Historian, was not present to provide a status update.

Outreach Committee:

Chuck Sterling, Outreach Coordinator, reported on the star party schedule for the near term: 01 February at Cesar Chavez Elementary, 10 February at Zia Middle School, 12 February at the Share Fair at Mesilla Valley Mall, and 02 March at Lynn Middle School. Refer to the yahoogroups.com for details.

Tombaugh Observatory:

Steve Barkes has received the new keys for the new doors at the observatory. Contact him for availability.

Loaner Telescope Program:

Janet Stevens, Committee Chairperson, was not present to provide a status update.

There were no additional committee or officer reports.

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Old Business:

Telescope Eyepieces

Any eyepiece donations for the Loaner Telescope Program are welcome and will save against the \$500 suggested to support the program. Jerry Gaber donated an eyepiece tonight.

Share Fair 2011

This event will be on Saturday, 12 February at the Mesilla Valley Mall from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Volunteers to set-up tables, telescopes, displays, slides, etc., at the Society booth are needed. Membership information and applications will be available. See Ron Kramer to volunteer

There was no additional old business discussed.

New Business:

Board of Directors' Meeting:

A meeting of the Board of Directors was held on 10 January. The following is a report on the topics discussed:

1. All officers and committee chairs will provide monthly reports. If not present, reports will be forward to the Society secretary for presentation at the monthly meeting and to the editor of the newsletter for publication in the *HDO*.

2. Membership dues:

- a. All paid memberships will expire on 31 December.
- b. Family membership dues will be \$30/year plus \$6/year/additional member.
- c. Annual dues will be payable from 01 January to 31 December, prorated at \$2.50/month (+\$0.50/family member).

d. Existing members should pay what is due up to 31 December 2011.

e. New members will pay at the prorated rate as they join.

If possible, family memberships will receive only one (1) copy of the Reflector Magazine. John McCullough will check the Astronomical League (AL) website to see if this possible.

3. The ASLC By-Laws were last updated in 1967. Jerry Gaber disagrees and notes that Kirby Benson produced a revision in 2009. Ron will contact Nils Allen for the status of that revision. Ron and Tracy Stuart will have a first draft available by 06 April for review. This subject will be tabled for the time being.

4. The vice-president, Tracy Stuart, will be responsible for all general meeting presentations and will inform the *HDO* editor and webmaster of the upcoming topic(s) for publication.

5. A Budget Committee will be established to confirm the 2011 budget and prepare the 2012 budget no later than 01 April 2011. The members will be:

Ron Kramer, President

Janet Stevens, Treasurer

Bert Stevens, Past President

Kim Morgan, Member

The budget will be presented to the membership no later than the July 2011 meeting.

6. A Library Loaner Telescope program similar to the one presented in *Sky & Telescope* magazine. Library staff will be trained and then a loaner telescope will be available through the Las Cruces library system to interested members of the public. A volunteer is needed to direct this until Janet Stevens is available.

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7. A Membership Committee will be formed to define the benefits of being a member of the Society. The goal is to increase Society membership to 100 by year's end.
 8. A Junior Astronomer Club has been proposed. The Board would like to form a committee to guide a program for 5-15 year olds. There are thousands of potential members in the area and the program could be promoted through the Society's Outreach programs. A chair that would report to the Membership committee, a meeting venue, and dues suggestions are needed. Contact Ron for more input.
 9. The proposed Leasburg Dam State Park (LDSP) Observatory was approved \$8000 in 2007. The Society has a working telescope for this venue. Numerous bureaucratic bottlenecks have been worked through, but no action is evident. The Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park is another possible venue being worked through the NM State Parks Director.
 10. Planning chairs are needed for the following 2011 Public Events:
 - a. Earth day
 - b. White Sands Star Party (Bert Stevens will coordinate)
 - c. Astronomy Day/24 Hours of Astronomy (Wes Baker will advise)
 - d. Renaissance ArtsFaire 2011 (paperwork is due by September 2011, a chair is needed to start planning soon)
 - e. MoonGaze/SunGaze (similar events, solar event prior to lunar; a chair is needed to coordinate with owners of International Delights Café regarding safety concerns, but Farmers' market on Saturdays is also a possibility. Wes Baker and Robert Land stressed being cautious with the public.)
 11. A Publicity Committee to work with local media to promote the ASLC in the news, on radio, and PBS outlets. This will help avoid conflicts with NMSU Astronomy Department events and will help numerous other ASLC committees with planning. It will also function as a single point of contact between the public and the Society. Ann McPhee volunteered to be on the committee, other activities will be on hold for the present.
 12. A Dark Sky Initiative to work with the International Dark Skies Association, other public entities, and ASLC committees to promote Dark Sky activities and help write (or enforce) existing laws and ordinances.
 13. A Fundraising Committee to work with the Events Committee to improve the status of the Society's treasury. A potential revenue stream is "selling" astrophotography images by Society members. A release form is available but a chair and more discussion are needed.
 14. A new Society brochure/flyer is needed for Outreach and Public events to promote the ASLC. Ron demonstrated a tri-fold, glossy stock example for handout that contains information on the Society and upcoming astronomical events.
 15. Corporate discounts available to Society members include a discount through High Point Scientific. Unfortunately, this discount is variable depending on the amount of merchandise purchased. If any members have contacts for discounts, please check to see if they may be available to Society members.
 16. The Society website needs to be kept up-to-date to be of benefit to Society members and the general public. Steve Barkes, webmaster, was not present to provide a status.

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Announcements:

Items for Sale:

No items were announced for sale.

Recognitions/Achievements:

Although not present, Dave Dockery became a silver member (70 of 109 objects) of the Caldwell Club on 16 December 2010. John Kutney is also a recent member of the Caldwell Club. Congratulations to both.

Announcements:

The Texas Star Party will not conflict with the May monthly meeting this year.

There were no additional announcements made.

Presentation:

The January program was not presented because the business portion of the meeting ran over its allotted time. Fred Pilcher agreed to make his presentation at the February monthly meeting.

This presentation was not recorded for rebroadcast on the Internet. Other meeting presentations can be accessed on the web at <http://www.aics-research.com/lectures/aslcnm/>.

Tracy Stuart moved and Bert Stevens seconded to adjourn the business portion of the meeting at 8:50 pm.

-Respectfully submitted by John McCullough, ASLC Secretary



The partially eclipsed Sun as it heads toward sunset during the June 10, 2002 annular eclipse. This eclipse was visible in Las Cruces as a partial solar eclipse visible shortly before sunset in the west. Silhouetted in the foreground is the antenna complex on top of Twin Peaks Hill. Image by Bert Stevens.

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Calendar of Events March 2011 (MST/MDT)

Mar. 01	Morning	Venus near the Moon
03	1:46 p.m.	New Moon
12	4:45 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
13	2 a.m.	Daylight Savings Time Begins
16	Evening	Mercury north of Jupiter
17		Jupiter at perihelion
19	12:10 p.m.	Full Moon
20	5:21 p.m.	March Equinox, Spring begins
22	7 p.m.	Mercury greatest distance east of Sun (19 degrees)
25	7:30 p.m.	February ASLC Meeting

Be sure to visit our web site for the latest updates: <http://www.aslc-nm.org>

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY of Las Cruces
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ASLC - Sharing the Universe
With Our Community
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